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# PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

## SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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

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## CHRISTIAN CONTENTMENT.

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“Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”—PHIL. iv., 11-13.

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This is a very remarkable declaration to be made by anybody. You will recollect a great many tales or fables that have been framed, of great gifts offered by an Eastern king to any man in his kingdom that was contented; and you will remember how ludicrous, in every case, the contentment turned out to be. It has been a matter of philosophical maxim and criticism that men never are pleased, but always are to be. Therefore, to hear one say, with the Apostle Paul, an intelligent and educated man, “I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content,” is to hear one of the most extraordinary statements that it is possible for a man to make. It is easy for one to say, “I am content.” It is easy to say and to feel this for an hour: I can understand how a man who lives for money, and has seen himself on the point of being choused out of twenty thousand dollars, and who, after nights and days of twisting, and chiseling, and contriving, and planning, and suffering, and anxiety, has, by a stroke, dextrous, keen, unexpected, got it, and goes home with it—I can understand how, for a whole evening, he may chuckle, and say, “This is worth living for; I am perfectly content.” I can understand how he should be content for a whole evening; for everybody is (I mean that some bodies are) content in the moment of the realization of any great desire.



Now, in all these things, if you scrutinize, if you question yourself, "Are you content with your life as a life?" can you say, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *there-with* to be content"? Does not your expectation limit itself to the fulfillment of certain wishes? Do you take into consideration, or does any man, the oppositions, the thwartings, the overthrows, the disasters, the humiliations, the mortifications, the stings of pride or of vanity? and does a man, looking over all this play of life and circumstance, say, "I have learned in every state to be content"? How many of you will hold up the hand to that? And yet, this is what Paul said.

But consider: Is Paul quite sure of himself? Paul was a large man. Few other men have appeared so far above the horizon. We are not yet ourselves large enough to take in the full measure of this man—for in my judgment theologians in times past have very largely occupied themselves with those elements in Paul's writings which were clearly secondary; and for very obvious reasons they have neglected those which were the profoundest, and which could be interpreted only by men who had gone into substantial experiences of the same kind. Therefore, largely, theology has been made out of the washings of gold that were in the mountains; and they have been the smallest part: whereas the treasure lay yet mountainously abundant, but deep and shut up in the rock.

Consider, in the first place, that his being content does not necessarily mean being pleased. I may be content; that is to say, I may have a calm patience in waiting over night at a miserable inn where have congregated smugglers, and drunken sailors, and the riffraff of a bad neighborhood. If, after fighting for my life in my little yacht, I had at last been driven up on shore, myself a wreck, and had crawled out of the water, and staggered to the light, and gone in there, would it not be proper for me to say, "I thank God for my deliverance and for my safety"? And yet, every element is distasteful to me. The air reeks with bad liquor and worse oaths; and the company are obscene and vile and violent: the conditions are detestable; but I that have es-

caped from the sea can say, "I am content to be here. Not that I am pleased at being there particularly; but as compared with something else it is tolerable. I have learned how to bear this." How did I learn it? I learned it by being swirled around for an hour in the whirlpools of the sea. I learned it by being thumped and pounded by the waves. I learned it by being chilled to the very marrow. I learned it by crawling up the beach, and stopping for breath at every rod, and falling and getting up again. I learned it because I thought I should perish before I could gain succor. I learned it because when I saw the light, and tried to go toward it, I almost gave up hope. I learned it because when I reached the house, being out of breath, I fell against the door and burst it in. So I learned to be patient with the surroundings in the midst of which I found myself. But it does not follow that a man is obliged to say, "I like these circumstances," in order to be content with them.

Then again, we must not confound content with a state of indifference. If a man has no sort of moral feeling, he is perfectly content to sit in camp on the plain and hear that which no human ear ought to hear. Not the common sewers of New York that empty into the sea all the concentrated feculence of that million-manned city are the worst streams. The worst common sewer on the globe is the mouth of man; and a man may sit in the midst of a crowd and have poured into his ear, hour after hour, tales of blood and pirate's narrations of hideous inhumanity,—themes and recitals that would make the dead shiver in their coffins; and, being as hard as an alligator himself, he may say, "Well, I am content." Content? Indifference is not content. Insensibility, the want of feeling—that is not what is meant by *contentment*.

And so the declaration of the apostle, "I have learned in all conditions to be content," was not that of a man who had no sensibility to what was going on around him—to right or wrong; to that which was good or that which was bad; to the success of right things or to the bad carriage of good things; to the exaltation of vice, crowned, imperial, carrying with it literature, art, everything resplendent; to virtue depressed, condemned, rolled in the gutter, yea, dying

in prison-houses. He knew these things; he was not thinking of all this waste when he said, "I have learned how to be content." He did not mean to say that he was content with all that he saw of the condition of things about him. Certainly not.

We are not to understand *contentment* in the sense of supineness or corpulent indolence. Paul was not a fat man, sure. He was a black-haired man, with a bilious-nervous temperament. He was a man of intense feeling, but of that intensity of feeling that does not stop. There is much intensity of feeling in the world that comes by gusts, and the very feeling necessitates a reaction, a lull, or a change; but Paul was one of those men who were tenacious of feeling, and went on and on and on with it. There were certain great elements in his nature that remind me of the old German story of an Eolian harp made by stretching iron wires between two great towers on the castle of a certain Count. Whenever the wind arose these wires began to sound; and as the wind waxed they sounded louder and louder; and when the storm and tempest came they roared out their strains of music: but it was always just those wires—no more and no others—giving precisely the same tones which rolled through the air.

There were two or three or four great strings in the mind of this apostle; and when the winds blew they sounded; and they went on sounding and sounding and sounding: and he seems to have had no art about it but that which is employed in creating the beauty of holiness—no historic curiosity; no sense of literary criticism; nothing Hellenic. He was sensitive to all that pertained to man's essential moral nature. In that he was a universal genius. And as to his being contented in any such sense as that of quiescence, the whole of his life, his passage from city to city, his unwearied labors, his sufferings, the things which he recounts of himself,—all these show that he was not content in any such way as not to be enterprising. In the same letter, and not far from this passage, he says that which indicates the intensity of his progressive nature:

"Not as though I had already attained, either were already per-



fect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

What is the figure? If he had drawn instead of spoken it, what would it have been but an arena, and the judges sitting, and a crowd all about? With a stroke of the chalk, he would have made this competitor and that competitor, stretching forward, not looking back, not minding what was behind, but pressing on, that they might reach the mark for the prize of their high calling in Christ Jesus. That is what he had just described himself to be; and yet this is the man who says, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Is that contentment, in the ordinary sense of the term?

In order, then, to see precisely the scope of this idea, we must develop the power in any man's life of a single great end or aim. Whenever a man (a superior nature it must always be) selects for himself a great ideal or aim, and pursues it with concentrated zeal and enthusiasm, it is in the power of that aim or ideal to make everything else relative, subordinate, and if necessary perfectly indifferent. Things that are good and things that are bad become indifferent relatively to the one main end that he is pursuing.

Take a low form of this idea. There are men who naturally are born to be fortune-builders, as much as some other men are born to be inventors, and some others to be skillful instructors, and others to be generators of ideas, and still others to be producers of music. There are men to whom the fortune-building instinct is a genius, congenital.

Now many such persons launch out in early life with as distinct a sense of their mission as though they had had an angelic visitation. They go to the farthest North; they go to the arid plains of Asia; they go to the East India Islands; they go to the equatorial regions of America; they go around the globe; they have educated themselves; all their powers work easily and concordantly toward the great end which they have set before them. They are not uninterested in the

course of time, or in the social life of the communities where they live; but the great aim of their life, and that which determines their likes and their dislikes, their moods, their elevations or depressions, is that of constructing a fortune. All things that tend in that direction are prosperities to them, and whatever things tend away from that are adversities to them. If it be needful, there is no exposure, there is no weariness, there is no sickness, there is no compliance, there is no self-denial, that they will not cheerfully go through for the sake of attaining that end.

A man is settled in China. It is necessary that he should have his house filled with the Chinese. It may be in a neighborhood where they are odious to his moral sense: but it is necessary; that is enough; he accepts them. It may be needful that he should bribe the Mandarin—if such a thing is possible; it may be necessary that he should make himself “hail fellow, well met,” with the natives, all of whose notions and customs are foreign to his education and to his instincts; but being essential to the supreme end of his life he accepts that. It is necessary that he should go out through the day. “It is unhealthy,” says his physician: “But it is necessary,” says he; and he goes out. Nothing can stop him. Fevers come upon him, and are a warning; but it is a warning unheard. He tosses it off. Here is a great end before him. His face is turned toward it. He says, “I will endure anything, and accept anything, for the sake of accomplishing this end.” And in communicating with his friends, he says, “I have learned to be content with whatever befalls me, so that I can gain what I am after.”

Take the generals that have commanded gloriously in the Indias. I am not now criticising the morality of the administration of Great Britain in those parts; I assume that the generals who went forth went to perform the duty which the Crown demanded of them. They are among a treacherous population with an ill-trained patriotism; they are suffering everything; they are sleeping in unhealthy neighborhoods; they are living in the midst of reeking morasses; they are oftentimes deprived of food and drink; they are performing the most arduous duties, debilitated, wasted to mere skele-



tons; and they write home, "The campaign is succeeding gloriously; it was hard on me at first, but I have learned to take everything; and I believe that ere long we shall complete the circuit, and that this Province will be humiliated and brought under the Government." In saying, "I have learned to take everything," they did not mean that they liked everything; but the great end which was before them had such a power upon them that it took away all care or thought of inconvenience and suffering, so that they might gain that end.

Better instances of that kind you can see in the pursuit of knowledge; as, for instance, when a poor student is determined to be a learned man. Certainly it is an honorable ambition. Don't you know that the best things in this world are not the things that are the most talked of or the most chronicled? If an apple-woman's stand is overthrown on the corner of the street, twenty reporters are at hand to tell how the apples went here and there. That goes into the papers. If a carriage is run away with, or a wheel comes off from a man's wagon, that goes into the papers. If there is anything visible and external and striking, that always goes into the papers. If the reporters can get hold of anything that anybody wants to keep secret, that goes in, sure. So there is a constant bringing into view upon the surface the small events and incidents of life; for a newspaper, a morning journal of the size of ours, with such a containing capacity, has a maw that must be fed. It is like a whale that takes in quantities of water that he may squirt it out and get the handful of shrimps that are left behind. At the same time, unsought, there are romances within reach, there are cruel histories, there are nascent heroisms, which are worthy to go down on the pages of history, and which are written in God's book of remembrance.

I had here, once, a boy that walked all the way from Michigan, with but one end in view—namely, to gain an education. He purposed to graduate at Columbia College in New York, I think. He secured, in part, and with some little help I was able to get him, a scholarship, so that his tuition cost him nothing. He took a round of lighting

and extinguishing lamps. He rose morning by morning to extinguish them, and he went out evening by evening to kindle them again. Soon he added to that a limited route of distributing newspapers. He had a room of his own; he bought his own little provender—his rice and molasses and Indian meal; he boiled his own pot, and was his own cook, and chambermaid, and washerwoman and steward, and treasurer, and factotum—happy man! He lived at the very border of frugality. So he worked his way, literally, on every side, that he might give to study some three or four hours of the day; and he never lost his courage, but persevered through good report and through evil report. He counted it a joy that he had a chance to light lamps, because thus he got some money, and counted it great luck that he could distribute papers, because that enabled him to make a little money. There sits the man who, I think, remembers it, and who, finding out something of the matter, helped the boy, and was his counsellor as well as his friend; and we talked together about him. Finally the boy went back home; he entered the army; he commanded, I think, a regiment, and returned home again, and died from the effects of the civil war. If I have the history correctly in memory, that was his career.

Now, what that man had within him was impatience at unknowing. He had a sense that manhood required intelligence, knowledge; that there was a power in that which, if he was going to execute the purposes of life, he must have; and he said, "I am content in my situation: I am gaining an education, and I am content with everything." Did he like to get up at three o'clock in the morning? How would you like it? Did he like to cook porridge over a fire, and to eat porridge every morning? How would you like it? Did he like these things? Not absolutely; but the end which he had in view was being accomplished; and the accomplishment of that end was so sweet and precious to him that all the subordinate inconveniences were as nothing. The joy that was set before him—that was the thing.

Look at the Rollinsons, and men of like reputation, that go abroad on the Asiatic plains, to Egypt, to Babylonia, to

the almost forgotten cities of Assyria, to Baalbec, and spend winters and summers among the treacherous, indolent and constantly rebellious natives, and suffer every annoyance and inconvenience, that they may dig out from the mounds the memorials of old cities, and satisfy their sense of knowledge, and add to the treasures of the world's history. All that they laugh at. It is not in itself agreeable; it is excessively distasteful; and yet they laugh at it.

A man will go out into the birch woods, and strike his camp and build his tent, and leave behind the thousand luxuries which, when he is at home, if he wants, and Jeems does not bring in a moment, the law is broken, and Jeems feels the severity of rebuke. He is out for trout; he is a fisherman; and when at the end of the day he comes back from the brooks that run into the lake, and brings in an eight-pound trout which he *caught*, did not *buy*, and exhibits it, it does not matter if he does sleep on a rock. He had just as lief sleep on a rock as not. The birch is sweeter and more fragrant than all the incense that Solomon ever brought to Jerusalem.

A man is a hunter. Men will go down on the South shore here, and, like lizards, crawl in the wet grass and reeds, and lie on their belly for hours together, waiting for a flock of geese which they believe will be brought so near by their stools that they can slap into them and bring five or six of them down. "I was content," says the hunter. Do you mean by that that you liked what you went through? "Not at all; but I got my pay out of that, and not out of this."

The same thing is developed continually in patriotism. Do you suppose that the men who are exiled, and who are universally detested and hated, are necessarily the unhappiest men in the world? I do not. If they were vulgar; if they were men of the flesh; if they were only disturbers of their country, and not emancipators; if they loved themselves, and hoped by change of administration or dynasty to be built up, that is one thing; but if they were men like Kossuth, who cared little for himself and everything for Hungary, it is another thing. What do you suppose this patriot cared if he *was an exile*? To him riches were nothing, poverty was



nothing, his suffering was nothing. Nothing was of value to him except as it stood related to the emancipation of old Hungary. He will see it yet before he dies, I am sure. Like Moses, he has been permitted to lead his people to the border of the promised land. He stands on the top of Nebo and looks over. He will not be permitted to pass in, but he will see it.

Take religious exaltation—and I am glad, here, to give one of the most remarkable illustrations of what men will cheerfully go through from a sect which is far removed from us. I mean not only the Roman Catholics, but those among them who are most disliked by Protestants—the Jesuits. I think there is not in human literature a scene more affecting than that which was presented by the early Jesuits among the Indians in Canada. I do not refer to the settlement of Quebec and Montreal; there was a civil administration there: but the Jesuits went to live in the neighborhood of Lake Simcoe in Upper Canada, and became residents among the Indians. They were without intercourse with the rest of the world; and the history of their ill-success, of the contumely which they endured, of their suffering night and day, of their patience and their faith, is not surpassed by the history of any equal number of men that have lived on the globe.

It may be said that their life was a mistake. Yes, in one sense it was; but, after all, it is a glorious thing to me that in every sect there are men who rise above self, and count not their lives dear to them so that they may be faithful to a principle—to an invisible cause. I would not take this laurel from the brow of the old Church. Nothing makes me so glad, for I believe in universal humanity. I believe in mankind, and every sect that has a martyr or a trophy glads me; for all sects are one in the greater church—the human household.

Besides this, how many men, inspired by the example of the apostles, have died deaths daily, and yet rejoiced in infirmities and afflictions because the grace of God sustained them, and because they had reason to believe that these very sufferings of theirs were connected with the

accomplishment of that great ideal end for which they lived, and in which their personality was so absorbed that whatever advanced it made them happy, and whatever retarded it made them unhappy !

The abandonment of a man's self to his higher instincts at the expense of all that is low in himself,—this it is that is alluded to by the apostle here. I will read the whole again, with some comments. He is speaking of the things that have been sent to him—presents ; for they used to send, in old times, one thing and another (I do not know that they sent flowers) to the apostle when he was here and there ; and he says :

“I rejoice in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again [there seems to have been some interruption of it] ; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.”

Paul was always a gentleman. He always took the best view of things. He always conceded the highest motives. He is a mean man who is constantly thinking that other people act meanly. He goes on to say :

“Not that I speak in respect of want ; for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content [I am willing to bear all that is put upon me for the sake of the thing that I am living for]. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound [I know how, that is, to be without a cent, and I know how to have my pocket full].”

Now, there are a great many men who can do either of them ; but there are very few who can do both. Men there are who have learned how to be poor ; they have accommodated themselves to poverty, being satisfied that that was to be their state ; and there are other men who are going to be rich, and who say, “I am destined to that, and I must therefore form my character and religious feeling on that supposition ; I must be a good man and live rightly, though I am rich ;” but to know how to swing and tick both ways—rich, poor—rich, poor—rich, poor ; to be a man with both ticks, that is not so easy.

Now, Paul says that he had learned that. I know not in what school he had been taught. I never heard of any school teaching such things as that. Why, Paul's doctrine of inspiration is enough to call out forty synods any time,

for expounding and discussion ; but here is a question which goes deeper than any question of that kind—How can a man live so that whatever place he may be in he is a full man, happy, courageous and strong ?

“I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound ; *everywhere*, and in *all things*, I am instructed [drilled, disciplined] both how to be full and to be hungry, and both how to abound and suffer need. I can do *all things* [brave words these, until you put on the rest] through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

Yes, Paul ! with such love as thine, and such communion as thine, the strength of Christ did enable thee to do all things, to suffer all things—to enjoy without harm, to suffer without damage, and to be, in fullness or in emptiness, in exaltation or in prison, as grand a man as ever walked the crooked surface of the globe.

In view of the opening thus far of this passage of Paul’s experience, I remark first :

We see the absolute freedom which absorption gives to any great nature. Absorption in a great and worthy end sets a man free from those cares, vexations and annoyances which belong to a lower state or mood. You understand it perfectly, because you practice it continually.

The child is going home. Vacation has come. I pity anybody who has not been sent away from home to school, because there are some experiences which he will never get—those which belong to the two or three weeks before the vacation—the day-counting, and all that ; and the final blessed breaking in of the morning of departure, when, for the very delirium of gladness, the boy cannot eat his breakfast, and the teacher almost whips him because he will not eat ; and the stage comes, and he sets out for home.

I am thinking of a boy who was educated at Amherst, who lived in Boston, and who rode through Belchertown, and Ware, and Worcester and Framingham, to Boston, and got in there about nine or ten o’clock at night, and went up to his house, and having been all day long wasted with the very exuberance of sensibility, felt himself as cold as a stone when he got there, and wondered why he did not feel the gladness and outpouring which he thought would come. There was not any more in him. He was thoroughly used



up with gladness, the absorption of joy was so great. What if he had to ride on a hard trunk upon the top of the stage? He did not care for the hard trunk—he was going home. What if they were behind time, and the driver could not stop for dinner? A sixteen-year-old boy has a lively sense of dinner; but what of that? He did not want any dinner—he was going home. And what if, going down hill, the brake slipped, and he was pitched into the bushes, and rolled in the gravel, and bruised and scratched and scarred? He picked himself up, and laughed, and did not care anything for that. Abstractly it was not pleasant; but a boy that was full of home—what did he care for any such thing? It was nothing.

And so, as in this very familiar illustration, you are bound to some great pleasure; and all the little incidents which fall out on the way, however incommodious they may be, are merged and lost.

Now, the large sphere in which that acts which you feel in your business, and in other relations, is the religious sphere. It is where a man has a sense of need; it is where he believes in God and providence; it is where he has sanctified himself, in a conscious fidelity that has no limitation, to his Master and Maker and Lover; it is where all thought and will and affection are consecrated in him, and he has given himself to a cause—there it is that in the intensity of his life, as related to its great end and aim, all other things become indifferent to him, and he can say, “I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content.” This great controlling purpose, as long as he is under its inspiration, subordinates everything, and dominates everything, and for the most part treads everything under foot.

This is the way to escape the common troubles of life. My brethren, one reason why we are so much harassed with care is that we have taken our aim so low, and that we live and work in the midst of troubles, and therefore are subject to them. If we think only of some inferior end of life, without any great superior and crowning influence, without thought of any sphere so above that in which we are every day working as that we can by the power of that higher life

control the lower life, then we become subject to care, and vexation and trouble. If there is nothing to you but your mechanical pursuits; if there is nothing to you but your commercial interests; if there is nothing to you higher than the praise of men; if all you expect in this life can be talked about and can be inventoried; if you have no inward and spiritual aim, then why should you not be under the dominion of care and trouble?

There has been a great change in building in New York, lately; and it is going on still. Now men build with wisdom. There are buildings from six to ten stories high; and I do not doubt that one of these days buildings will go up sixteen or twenty stories high. If they can be secure from fire they will be the better for it. The elevator will take you up instantly; and the higher you go the further you will be from the noise of the street; the further you will be from dust; the further you will be from all that mud-rabble interference; the purer will be the atmosphere; the clearer will be the light; the greater will be the silence and, in a word, the comfort.

The fact is, we have, to a very large extent, been building hovels. They are based on the dirt; they are filled with fleas and gnats and flies and bad odors; and no disinfectant can do much to rid them of these. We must be built higher, and lift ourselves above the great body of influences which pester, and sting, and vex us, in this lower way of living.

I may say, too, that no man who lives in his lower nature can be content unless he abandons himself utterly to it. There is a way of living, I think, in a man's lower nature which is tolerable. Where a man, for instance, is strong enough and rich enough, and is circumstanced so that he can have an uninterrupted flow of physical pleasure at the table, and in all the moods in which the physical sensations of pleasure are gratified, and the man does not think of anything else, and says, "These are my end in life;" where a man has money, and can choose his companions and his surroundings, and whatever ministers to the sensuous appetites, he does not want anything more, and he lives a comparatively happy life. It is in vain for the pulpit to say

that there is no happiness except that which comes from religion and right-living. The pirate with his fellow-wassailers ; men with violent passions ; those who congregate in saloons, and talk of fights and all manner of brutalities ; human beings whose gods are dogs and cocks—they have their happiness. “ Verily, they shall have their reward.” There is an enjoyment which belongs to their level. The *bon vivant* is happy : the fat fellow who does not care for politics ; who is never disturbed by the ups or the downs of religion ; who is not troubled by any ecclesiastical questions ; who is indifferent as to whether the North or the South has the ascendancy ; who has no funds to risk, and does not care whether prices go up or down on the exchange ; with whom, when there is any confusion, the only question is, “ Is Fulton Market burned ?” As long as that stands, the fountain of his enjoyments is sure.

Therefore, if a man wants simple happiness, he ought to do one of two things : he ought to take one extreme or the other. A man has it in his power to extinguish in himself that which is peculiarly manly, and of accepting that which is brutal and beastly. By accepting the latter he may secure a low form of pleasure. But woe be to that man who gives considerable strength and latitude to his lower life, and accepts the ideal and purpose of a higher life. The moral sense of such a man acts as an inquisitor, a spy and a tormentor. He wants enjoyment, but his higher nature condemns and oppresses him, and his life is a perpetual conflict between the higher and the lower. As Paul says, “ The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh ;” and this internecine war in the soul is going on all the while in cases of thousands and thousands of men.

Oh, that men understood that if they want emancipation, harmonization, peace, contentment, they must give themselves wholly to the cause of God and truth, and go into it with enthusiasm, and make it dearer than anything else on earth to them. Then they would control in themselves all those ten thousand elements and influences which are the cause of their vexation and trouble.

Christian brethren, one more application : if Christian



ministers would stop disputing as to whether the laying on of hands gives grace or not; as to whether a man must have apostolicity or not; as to whether the church has a right to tell who shall and who shall not preach, how he shall preach, and when, and on what subjects—if they would stop discussing this whole question, and concentrate their zeal and power to bring themselves into precisely the same state and mood of mind that the Apostle was in when he said: “Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel:” “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain [victory either way]:” “Though the more abundantly I love, the less I be loved:” “Some preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds; notwithstanding, I rejoice whether in pretense or in truth Christ is preached:” “My life is hid with Christ in God”—if they would so identify themselves with Christ as the simple expression of whatever is truest in thought, purest in sentiment, sweetest in affection, most glorious in happiness-producing power, and would live for it, saying, “Poverty is nothing, reputation is nothing; I take the one and the other indifferently; for me to live is to preach Christ in the wilderness or in the city, in places where it is thickly populated, or in places where few men congregate; I am willing to be put up or down; I am nothing, but the cause of God is everything”—under such circumstances they would be happy.

Where is there such disinterestedness? Where is there such fervor of affection for the grand elements which are in Christianity? Do you suppose that pulpits would have empty seats and that churches would linger and lag; and do you suppose that it would be hard to raise salaries for ministers, if that spirit prevailed? It is the want of full manliness, it is the want of intense consecration to Jesus Christ, it is the want of such love for God in mankind as pours oblivion and indifference over a man’s own reputation or standing, and fills him full of inexpressible sorrow if in any way the cause suffers through him, and with unutterable joy if by suffering the loss of all things the cause of God may go up—it is to the want of these things that the languishing condition of so many churches is due.

If, in the crisis of the battle of Trafalgar, Nelson had believed that victory for his country would be secured by his being thrown overboard, do you not suppose he would have said to his men, "Over with me, boys—over with me!" Dear old England was more to him, ten thousand times, than his life. And it is the want of continuous heroism and continuous devotion to the work of God, open and apparent to all men, that makes the pulpit weak.

There lie before men grand mountainous promises; streams of happiness run past them, and yet they are searching everywhere for water to drink. There is a river of the water of life coming down from above; and if there is anything on earth which is poor and pitiful, it is the church attempting to manage the grandeur of divine sacrifice, and the marvel and wonder of Christ's life, in the same way in which they would manage a stocking factory, or in the way in which they would quilt a coverlet, with scraps of their own garments, and what not. Is it wonderful that the church does not thrive on such food as it receives? I tell you, religion is to flourish in this world by a fervor of the spirit; by an enthusiasm of faith; by an intensity of love; by a consecration of soul and body to the work of God. There are many noble instances of faithful, disinterested and self-sacrificing working for Christ; but they have not been common—they have not by any means been universal; and we are going to have a victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil, not by apologies, not by philosophical treatises, and not by disputations with science: if we are going to conquer, the victory will come through faith in Jesus Christ on the part of men and women, the purity of whose lives nobody can dispute. I do not care whether the Pre-Raphaelite school, or any other school, is reputed to be the best; to me that is the best school that paints the best pictures, and that is the one that I shall choose. You cannot make glorious men and women, and deny that the cause which makes them is the cause which ought to have prevalence.

## PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

WHERE is the way that is cast up, O our God? Where is the road to the New Jerusalem along which the ransomed come? How shall we behold afar off its shining battlements? Yet there is a way which the bird doth not know, or along which the fowler hath not passed—the way of sorrow; the way of disappointment; the way of sickness; the way of death. By thy suffering and death thou didst open the truths of the great other world as never before; and toward that great other world we, through trouble and trial, do find the way, strait and narrow, often cutting our feet, and often bruising our hands; and yet the way of ascent it is; and thou dost grant unto us in the far-off and the imagined, in that which we can see and discern only by faith, truth, revelation therein, and comfort abounding—more than worldly comfort; and companionship—strange companionship with those whom we cannot speak to, with whom we cannot clasp hands, who set at defiance every earthly way of friendship and communion. And yet how blessed is the companionship which we have with those who are in the far-off and invisible!

So, though we seek for thee in the night and in the day; though we listen at times, hoping that down out of the infinite above us there will come some voice or whisper, and bring home to us the reality of God, yet in other times thou art pleased to send us those wings by which we are lifted up into thy presence, and our souls know, and discern, and rejoice, and are refreshed in the vision, and come back again chastened but strengthened, full of content, willing to bear and to endure.

Thy way with us is not strange to thee; and it is strange to us only because we are so unpracticed in spiritual things. We have but the dim discernings of the life that is to be. Its germs are with us. Its beginnings we perceive, and we are constantly measuring it with this common life of the body, and judging it by those rules which spring up from our outward and material forms; whilst thou art dealing from the fullness, and the glory, and the liberty, and the joy, and the largeness of that divine effluence which is in thee and around thee, and in which all do dwell who have escaped from the flesh, and have the freedom absolute of the Spirit.

Thus our life hovers between the flesh and the spirit, often in conflict, constantly in misunderstanding; and our vision, at times so clear, is clouded again by the exhalation of our passions; and it is only because we believe that thou art steadfast, and that thou art subject to none of the moods which sweep across us, because thou dwellest in a cloudless land and art thyself unslumbering and unchanging, infinite in thought, and love, and tender, nourishing mercy—it is only in the thought of this that we have victory sure and complete. *Because thou livest, O Lord Jesus, we shall live also.* This is our faith, and the sum of our hopes. We are struggling. We are fighting our way through the wilderness. The Amalekite, and the Philistine, and the Moabite, and the Edomite, and all the heathen



nations that are in possession of thy heritage are upon us, and we are weak and cowardly; and yet we are fighting our way through as fast as we can, faint yet pursuing. Our whole hope is in thee, in thy mightiness, in thine unweariableness, in thy patience that puts to shame all motherhood, in the reach of thy thought, in the grandeur of the divine nature. Thou liftest thyself at times above us more magnificent than the stars that look down at night upon us. More grand art thou than is the sun in the balmy days of summer, when it walketh through the heavens borrowing effulgence at every step, and covering the earth with glory. Thou art more than the sun and the stars. Thou art thyself the Sun of the sun, and the Light of the stars. Thou art crowned with them, and filled with them; thy greatness, the plenitude of thy soul, the majesty of thy mercy, thine infinitude of love—these make thee what thou art. Thy great beating heart that sends warm blood and nourishment through the boundless universe—our hope is in it—in thee.

And now, O Lord, why should we look out of our cradle where we but prattle, and instruct thee in the way of the household, and in the way of caring for us? What can we do but to reach out our arms, and be taken up by thee, and then be content? In thine arms is heaven; and we need nothing but that, glory be to thy name! There are multitudes who are witnesses of the fullness and sufficiency of the presence of God in the soul. Here are children of darkness pressing forward to tell of the light that has arisen to them in their darkness. Here are the weary and overborne who lift themselves up at thy name to bear witness that thou hast taken off their burdens, or that thou hast given them grace to bear them. Here are those who have been perplexed and vehemently bestead by the wants of the world, and have made a safe harbor, and are bearing testimony that thou art the Pilot and the Captain of their salvation. We rejoice that thou art thus raising up witnesses. And whatever men may say, the human soul is a record and a proof of thy presence and of thy power, as well as of thine existence.

We pray that more and more thou wilt manifest thyself unto thy people, and give them the glory of faith, and the rejoicing of hope, and the confidence of assured and established love; and we pray that thou wilt thus glorify thyself. We cannot separate altogether our own interests from thy glory; but we believe and know that as the child is bound up in the parent, and its interests inure to the parents', so in some way we are tied to thee, and thou dost glorify thyself in those things which have become self interest and selfishness in us. Thou carest for us for thine own sake as well as for our sakes.

And we pray that thou wilt grant that each one of us—our children, our friends, all who listen to our witness for Christ—may be able to make known what is the greatness of his goodness toward us, and what is the magnitude of his power toward all those who will put their trust in him; and may the name of the Lord Jesus Christ become, above every other name, a name of grace, a name of fruit, a name of beauty. May we sit under it as under the fruit-trees of

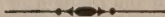
the orchard; and may it shake down upon us all grace, all food, all joy.

We beseech thee that thou wilt grant that those who are attempting to preach the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ may beware of so preaching it as that it shall be represented by the carnal element that is in *them*. Grant that they may not disfigure it by anger; by an untoward zeal; by self-confidence; by rancorous passions; by envies and jealousies; by anything that shall misrepresent the sweetness and purity and infinite goodness of the Lord Jesus Christ, who died to save the world.

We pray, O Lord, that thou wilt teach us to walk among men as He walked—with the same patience; with the same faithful rebuking of evil; with the same discernment in the speaking of the truth; with the same sorrow for men—even his own adversaries, who slew him.

O Lord, we dare not speak to thee of the mystery of thy waiting, and of the condition of mankind. If thou art Father, what shall become of these? If they are thy children scattered throughout the continents of the earth, coming as the beasts, and going as the beasts, what shall become of them? Thou hast not revealed these things. We only pray that thy kingdom may come. Let it come, for the earth is waiting for thee. Thou art not forgetful, thou art not slumbering, King of Eternity. Thou hast thy reason. Thou wilt yet unveil thyself and make thyself known; and then we shall be satisfied. Forgive us if at times in our weakness we wonder and suffer. Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit.  
*Amen.*



## PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

OUR Father, we beseech thee that thou wilt add thy blessing to the word spoken. Grant that there may be more power resting upon the hearts of thy people. Bring in again the pentecostal day, and the descent of the Holy Spirit, with tongues of flame. Bring in, we pray thee, the consecration of the altar, cleansing it as with fire. We pray that the victory of thy church may be found in the holiness of its priests; in the exaltation of their ambitions; in the heroism of their lives. So may thy name be honored; so may men long to believe thee. So may men search after thee whose children are such as they. Grant, we beseech thee, that there may be this evidence of thy divinity, and of thy provident administration of the Holy Ghost in our day.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit.  
*Amen.*

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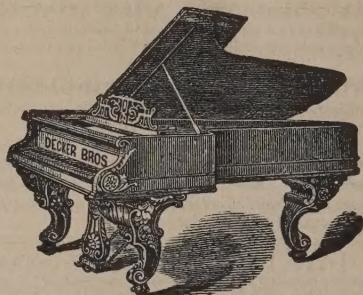
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